

### Amendments to the Claims

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of handling time-sensitive messages, comprising steps of:  
2 marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-sensitive;  
3 sending the marked message from a computing device of the creator to a computing  
4 device of a recipient for whom the message was created, such that after the marked message is  
5 received at the computing device of the recipient, it will automatically be rendered to the recipient  
6 using an application adapted for processing the message, and the recipient will be ~~forced to~~  
7 ~~respond thereto~~ prevented from performing other actions with the application until the recipient  
8 provides a response to the message, within a time period of the time-sensitivity; and  
9 automatically receiving a reply from the recipient, sent from the computing device of the  
10 recipient to the computing device of the creator following the recipient's response thereto ~~within~~  
11 ~~the time period of the time-sensitivity~~.

1 Claim 2 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the marking step  
2 further comprises indicating, by the creator, that snoozing is allowed by the recipient for this  
3 message, such that the recipient will be allowed to temporarily delay the response to the rendered  
4 message within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

1 Claim 3 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the marking step  
2 further comprises indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the time-  
3 sensitivity of the message.

1 Claim 4 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 3, wherein the marking step  
2 further comprises indicating, by the creator, a starting time for the time period of the time-  
3 sensitivity of the message.

1 Claim 5 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving the marked message at the computing device of the recipient;  
3 determining, at the computing device, whether the time period of the time-sensitivity of  
4 the received message has been reached; and  
5 automatically rendering requiring the received message, at the computing device, to be  
6 rendered to the recipient in the application, and preventing the recipient from performing other  
7 actions with the application, forcing the recipient to respond thereto, within the time period of the  
8 time-sensitivity if so.

Claim 6 (canceled)

1 Claim 7 (currently amended): A method of improving electronic communications, comprising  
2 steps of:  
3 receiving a plurality of electronic messages at a computing device of a recipient to whom  
4 the electronic messages are addressed; and  
5 evaluating, at the computing device, the received electronic messages for processing by  
6 the computing device, further comprising steps of:  
7 determining whether a selected one of the received electronic messages is marked

8 as being time-sensitive; and

9 requiring the selected one to be rendered to the recipient, and forcing the recipient  
10 to respond thereto, within a time period of the time-sensitivity if the determining step has a  
11 positive result and [[the]] a time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded,  
12 automatically rendering the selected one to the recipient in an application adapted for processing  
13 the selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity, and preventing the recipient from  
14 performing other actions with the application until the recipient provides a response to the  
15 selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

Claim 8 (canceled)

1 Claim 9 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the steps of:  
2 determining, when the selected one is marked as being time-sensitive and the time period  
3 of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded, whether snoozing is allowed for the  
4 selected one; and

5 if so, allowing the recipient to delay the response to the selected one until a later time,  
6 wherein the later time remains within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

1 Claim 10 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the evaluating step  
2 further comprises the step of:

3 determining, when the selected one is marked as being time-sensitive and the time period  
4 of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded, whether snoozing is allowed for the

5 selected one; and

6 if so, allowing the recipient to suppress the ~~requiring step~~ preventing only while (1) a  
7 starting time of the time period has been reached but (2) an ending time of the time period has not  
8 been reached.

1 Claim 11 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the step  
2 of:

3 sending a notification of the response to a computing device of a creator of the rendered  
4 selected one.

1 Claim 12 (original): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the step of determining  
2 whether processing of the rendered selected one is complete, and if not, remembering the  
3 rendered selected one for subsequent evaluation at a later time, wherein the later time is within the  
4 time period of the time-sensitivity.

Claim 13 (canceled)

1 Claim 14 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are e-  
2 mail messages.

1 Claim 15 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are  
2 electronic calendar events.

1 Claim 16 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are to-do  
2 items.

1 Claim 17 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the steps of:  
2 determining, when the selected one is marked as being time-sensitive and the time period  
3 of the time-sensitivity is approaching or has been reached but not exceeded, whether a hierarchy  
4 of event notification techniques has been defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if  
5 so, selecting a recipient notification technique which corresponds to an amount of time in the time  
6 period in addition to or instead of automatically rendering the step of requiring the selected one to  
7 be rendered to the recipient.

1 Claim 18 (currently amended): A system for handling time-sensitive messages, comprising:  
2 means for marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-sensitive;  
3 means for sending the marked message from a computing device of the creator to a  
4 computing device of a recipient for whom the message was created, such that after the marked  
5 message is received at the computing device of the recipient, it will automatically be rendered to  
6 the recipient using an application adapted for processing the message, and the recipient will be  
7 forced to respond thereto prevented from performing other actions with the application until the  
8 recipient provides a response to the message, within a time period of the time-sensitivity; and  
9 means for automatically receiving a reply from the recipient, sent from the computing  
10 device of the recipient to the computing device of the creator following the recipient's response

11 ~~thereto within the time period of the time-sensitivity.~~

1 Claim 19 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 18, wherein the marking means  
2 further comprises means for indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the  
3 time-sensitivity of the message.

1 Claim 20 (currently amended): A system for improving electronic communications, comprising:  
2 means for receiving a plurality of electronic messages at a computing device of a recipient  
3 to whom the electronic messages are addressed;

4 means for determining, at the computing device, whether a selected one of the received  
5 electronic messages is marked as being time-sensitive, and if so, whether a time period of the  
6 time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded; and

7 means for automatically rendering the selected one to the recipient in an application  
8 adapted for processing the selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity, and  
9 preventing the recipient from performing other actions with the application until the recipient  
10 provides a response to the selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity, requiring the  
11 selected one to be rendered to the recipient, and forcing the recipient to respond thereto, within  
12 the time period of the time-sensitivity if so.

Claim 21 (canceled)

1 Claim 22 (currently amended): A computer program product for handling time-sensitive

2 messages, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media and  
3 comprising:

4 computer-readable program code for marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-  
5 sensitive;

6 computer-readable program code for sending the marked message from a computing  
7 device of the creator to a computing device of a recipient for whom the message was created,  
8 such that after the marked message is received at the computing device of the recipient, it will  
9 automatically be rendered to the recipient using an application adapted for processing the  
10 message, and the recipient will be ~~forced to respond thereto~~ prevented from performing other  
11 actions with the application until the recipient provides a response to the message, within a time  
12 period of the time-sensitivity; and

13 computer-readable program code for automatically receiving a reply from the recipient,  
14 sent from the computing device of the recipient to the computing device of the creator following  
15 the recipient's response thereto ~~within the time period of the time-sensitivity~~.

1 Claim 23 (previously presented): The computer program product according to Claim 22, wherein  
2 the computer-readable program code for marking further comprises computer-readable program  
3 code for indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the time-sensitivity of the  
4 message.

1 Claim 24 (currently amended): A computer program product for improving electronic  
2 communications, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable

media and comprising:

computer-readable program code for receiving a plurality of electronic messages at a computing device of a recipient to whom the electronic messages are addressed;

computer-readable program code for determining, at the computing device, whether a selected one of the received electronic messages is marked as being time-sensitive, and if so, whether a time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded; and

computer-readable program code for ~~requiring the selected one to be rendered to the recipient, and forcing the recipient to respond thereto, within the time period of the time-sensitivity~~ automatically rendering the selected one to the recipient in an application adapted for processing the selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity, and preventing the recipient from performing other actions with the application until the recipient provides a response to the selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity, if so.

Claim 25 (canceled)

Claim 26 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the requiring step further comprises the steps of:

automatically starting execution of an application for rendering the selected one, at the computing device of the recipient, if the execution of the application is not currently started;

automatically bringing a window rendered by the application to a foreground of a display of the computing device and making the window active;

automatically rendering the selected one in the active window; and



8                    requiring the recipient to take action with the selected one before performing any other  
9                    tasks with the application.